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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the paid employment of mid-nineteenth century women, especially female heads of households, in two West Virginia cities. During this period, Wheeling was a large industrial city and major transportation center, while Morgantown was an isolated college town. An examination of census entries and city directories for Wheeling and Morgantown from 1840 to 1880 reveals that women had limited opportunities for paid employment. The vast majority of women followed occupations that capitalized on their traditional domestic and nurturing skills. Even when they moved into retail shops, they usually did so in areas related to cooking and sewing. Women in unusual occupations often appeared to have inherited their husbands' businesses. While Wheeling listed a number of women as teachers, particularly during the Civil War, this field seems to have been closed to women in Morgantown. Employment opportunities for women apparently expanded during the Civil War, only to diminish again by 1870. Women without skills or funds were relegated to the hard low-wage jobs of seamstress or washerwoman, or, if they wanted more money, they became prostitutes. In general, though, women worked in a pre-industrial economy, even when they lived in a heavily industrialized city such as Wheeling. This paper contains 36 endnotes. (SV)

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"Home Work" and Nineteenth-Century West Virginia Women

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Richard Scarry's popular children's book asks What Do People Do All Day?. The goal of this paper is to ask a related question: what did women do all day in two West Virginia cities, Wheeling and Morgantown, in the mid-nineteenth century? To be even more narrow in focus, the task at hand is to examine what women did who were heads of households, at least as identified in the U.S. census from 1840 to 1880. Most of these women, it appears, worked at home or in nearby stores, the better to be able to care for their families.

First, it is important to set out some of the parameters of the study and the limitations of sources encountered. To avoid drowning in numbers, the paper will concentrate on methodology and preliminary findings. In West Virginia, including the section of Virginia that became West Virginia in 1863, women had limited opportunities for paid employment in the nineteenth century; so did all women in the United States.[2]

Studies that look at the employment options for women who chose to work at home in the nineteenth century are rare, and that is the gap this paper tries to fill. In addition, we are only now beginning to study systematically West Virginia women's history. Fortunately, Suzanne Lebsock's Free Women of Petersburg provides an excellent reference for context and methodology to start studying the lives of ordinary women in West Virginia.

If the gap is so large, why start in Wheeling and Morgantown? The vastly different economies and populations of the two cities make them logical to compare and contrast. Wheeling was a major industrial city in the nineteenth century, but an industrial city that was male-oriented in its employment opportunities because work in the coal mines, nail factories, glass

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factories, and iron foundries usually required brute strength as well as skill, strength that proper nineteenth-century women did not have or did not show.[3] Wheeling was the largest Virginia city west of the mountains in the mid-nineteenth century. With a population of 8,793 in 1840 and 14,083 twenty years later, it was outranked by only Richmond and Norfolk on the eve of the Civil War. Wheeling was also a major transportation center located at the junction of the National Road, Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, and Ohio River, making it easy for goods and people to move through the city. When Virginia's population in 1860 was almost 98% native born, Ohio County's, where Wheeling is the county seat, was only about 75% native born.[4]

Morgantown, on the other hand, was small and isolated in mid-century. It was a center of education, off the beaten path and therefore safe for students, with an economy based on commerce, government (as the county seat of Monongalia County), and a few small industries like grist mills. It would not be a major industrial city until after the railroad provided through service to the north in 1894. As proof of its insularity, only 160 of its 12,947 residents (1.2%) were foreign-born in 1860, making it even more "native" than the state as a whole.[5] The town had an estimated population of 1,000 in 1853-4, doubling to 1,900-2,000 by 1868 if one included its "suburbs" of West Morgantown (now Westover) and Durbanah.[6] The 1868 Directory of the Monongahela and Youghiogheny Valleys described it as follows:

> Nor does the town on a longer acquaintance, lose its attractiveness, its social characteristics being that of a high-toned moral Virginia settlement of the elder day, and the absence of drunkenness, and other small vices, is at once noticeable to the stranger.
>
> Depending solely upon trading with the surrounding country for its business, the evils which attend manufacturing villages are unknown, and lying off the main lines of railroad travel, it escapes vices which creep into towns situated upon them, from

the cities . . . .[7]

Thus, if the "male economy" influenced women's opportunities, there should have been very different opportunities in cities as diverse as cosmopolitan Wheeling and isolated Morgantown.

The next problem, then, became how to discover those opportunities and understand the types of women who held whatever jobs were available. Since it is difficult to study these "anonymous" women, some comments on methodology used to date are important.

The census of the United States is a logical starting point for identifying heads of households. The 1840 census clearly shows Wheeling as a separate city, but the census for Morgantown before 1860 is simply incorporated into the county census. One must hazard an educated guess that, when entries stop showing "farmer" as the primary occupation, one has reached the Morgantown listings. When "farmer" reappears as the chief listing for men, it is fair to assume that the census citations for Morgantown have ended. J.D.B. DeBow, in his analysis of the 1850 census, noted that this was a common problem, particularly for "smaller towns at [sic] the South."[8]

The census for 1840 identifies the head of the household and males and females in the household by age categories. In some cases, for instance Hannah Acker, it is easy to assume that she is probably the female aged 30-40, while her children are likely to be the 3 younger males and the female aged 15-20. The census can also tell us that the family members were free whites and, in this case, that none of the males were employed in various job categories given.[9] If the census taker was accurate, there were no pensioners, no one was disabled by being blind, deaf and dumb, or insane or idiots at either the public or private charge. Also, all the whites over age 20 could read and

write in this household.

In the case of Mary Taylor's family, the situation is a bit more complex. That household contained 1 male and 1 female aged 5-10, 2 males aged 10-15, 1 female aged 15-20, 1 female aged 30-40, and 1 female aged 70-80. The children presumably belong to the female aged 30-40, but is that Mary Taylor? Is the older woman her mother? her mother-in-law?

If there were slaves in the household, they were listed as part of the household in the census. Christiana Beymer's household, for example, included 14 males over the age of 20, 2 females aged 10-15, one female aged 70-80 (Beymer), 2 male slaves, and 5 female slaves.[10]

But these three examples only raise questions that the census cannot answer unless we link this information to that contained in additional sources like city directories, local histories, and vital statistics, deeds, and tax records; only the city directories and some local histories have been tapped to date. The 1839 city directory for Wheeling, the earliest available, tells us that Hannah Acker was a widow and that she and her daughters were seamstresses. So, we know that the family had some income even though the males were not working. Mary Taylor was a widow who kept a grocery in South Wheeling; the grocery was probably in the same building as her home, but that cannot be ascertained from the directory. It is probably safe to assume that Mary was then the female aged 30-40. Christiana Beymer was an innkeeperess, by the way; hence the unusual household structure in the third example.[11]

By 1850, we can at least learn the names of all the members of the household, their specific ages, and their birthplaces. The profession, occupation, or trade is given for each male over the age of 15. Maybe it is just as well that women were not included because DeBow noted that "the

occupations [shown in the census] are not distinguished in a manner calculated to result in any correct conclusions . . . ."[12] Fortunately, there is an 1851 city directory for Wheeling to provide information on occupations for women.[13] While the directories usually identify widows, the 1851 issue does not do so if there is an occupation listed. Hence, Joanna Adrian, whom we know from the census to be a 38-year-old women born in England and the head of a household of 8, is shown as a mantua maker in the directory. Since only one other person in the census household, 17-year-old Hannah E., had the last name of Adrian, we can only speculate about the rest of the individuals at this time. Finally, while the census tells us that Mrs. Adrian owned $1,000 in real estate, DeBow cautioned his readers that "the value of real estate is taken loosely, and induces no confidence."[14]

The story gets more intriguing when we get to the household headed by Ellenore Walsh, a 44-year-old white woman born in Pennsylvania who owned $15,000 worth of real estate. Her household of 34, including herself, consisted of 33 women and 1 male, 25-year-old James Constantine, a servant born in Ireland. But who were the other women? None were identified in the city directory. They ranged in age from 10 to 45, with 4 born in Ireland, 3 in Germany, 1 in England, and the rest in Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia (common birthplaces for Wheelingites); but there was also a 10-year-old girl born in Georgia. Again, by the census return, no one was in school during the previous year, and all residents were able to read and write. None were deaf or dumb, insane, idiots, paupers, or convicts. Was this a convent? If so, shouldn't at least the 11 girls 15 and under have been in school? Is this a house of prostitution? An explanatory note from Francis Walker's compendium for the 1870 census adds possible further intrigue to the Walsh

household. In that year, he commented that his tables

> embrace[d] gainful and reputable occupations only. . . .
>
> The reason for excluding gamblers, prostitutes, keepers of brothels, and such persons from the Table of Occupations . . . [is] that, from the necessity of the case, the numbers thus reported must be wholly inadequate to the fact, and a seeming count of them in the census would have the effect to mislead rather than to instruct.
>
> Some from these classes may have taken refuge, through false statements, in one or another of the occupations of good repute (notably keepers of brothels as "boarding-house keepers," a euphemism familiar to the compilers of city directories,) . . . .[15]

Clearly, more work will need to be done to track down Walsh and her housemates!

By 1860, the census takers decided for the first time to note the profession, occupation, or trade of each person, male or female, over 15 years of age. The 1860 compendium of statistics for the census included a table listing all cities or towns with a population over 10,000 in that year. Wheeling was ranked 65th, with 14,083 people. Morgantown was not on the list. The interesting statistic here is that Wheeling had 2,142 men and 961 women employed in occupations figured in the table of manufactures that was part of the population rankings. This put her ahead, in absolute numbers, of Boston, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Chicago, Albany, Washington, D.C., Detroit, and Milwaukee in the twenty largest cities. It also put her ahead of Richmond, Norfolk, and Alexandria, the only other Virginia cities listed.[16] To find out where they were working, one has to go to the compendium on manufacturing statistics. The largest group was the 70 women working with 25 men in the city's one cotton goods establishment, presumably the Wheeling Cotton Mills.[17] As will be seen, however, these women were not heads of households identified in the census. Monongalia County, including Morgantown, showed only 65 men in manufacturing establishments and no women.[18]

In his compendium for the 1870 census, Francis Walker divided occupations into agriculture, professional and personal services, trade and transportation, and a final category of manufactures and mechanical and mining industries. It is here where Walker put in his warning about disreputable occupations. He also noted additional problems in tracking the occupations of women. While he could account for approximately 28.3 million persons as the population of the United States above the age of 10, only 12.5 were in the Table of Occupations. Most of these unaccounted for were women and children under the age of 16 because, he claimed, "the adult males of the country are as fully accounted for as could be expected." Walker lamented the lack of precise definitions for occupations in the census because of "the utter want of apprenticeship in this country, the facility with which pursuits are taken up and abandoned, and the variety, and, indeed, seeming incongruity of the numerous industrial offices that are frequently united in one person." It was impossible, he felt, for census enumerators to list "more than the plain and simple characterization of each man's employment in the common phrase of the working people themselves."[19]

Still, Walker felt there should be more to be learned. After some fancy arithmetic, he estimated the number of women "keeping house" at 7.4 million and concluded that "an examination of the numbers reported under each specific occupation will lead to the conclusion that many employments, and these quite the most important, furnish practically no cases whatever of such union of family-housekeeping with paid service elsewhere."[20] Indeed, Walker figured that those women who could both keep house and have gainful employment probably totaled no more than about 180,000 across the country in 1870.[21] The remaining 1.55 million females above the age of 16 included "grown daughters

living at home, widowed mothers supported by their children, ladies living upon the income of accumulated property, as well as women of the pauper, vagrant, and criminal classes."[22] Note his use of the term "ladies" only for those with accumulated property!

Where did the millions of women that could be put into trades work? Walker listed a total of 338 occupations for males and females under his four categories. Of a total work force of about 115,000 men and women in West Virginia, only 8,153 (7%) were women. Of those 8,153, 78% were domestic servants and about 7% teachers or laundresses; about 8% were tailoresses, seamstresses, milliners, and dress and mantua makers.[23] This, plus the 3% of women engaged in agriculture, left almost no room for anyone else, and as we will see, there were few others who needed a space in the tables.

By 1880, the census listings had become far more detailed. One major addition was the exact addresses, useful for Wheeling but not for Morgantown, as that city was still to small to use street addresses. In addition, we can now learn the relation of those listed to the head of the household, each person's civil condition (single, married, widowed, divorced), specific birthplaces of parents, and information about unemployment and illnesses or disabilities.

In addition to using city directories for supplemental information, local histories are useful sources for snippets of information about specific women. Newton, Nichols, and Sprankle's 1879 History of the Pan-Handle included an article that apparently appeared in the Wheeling Intelligencer in 1815; in describing Wheeling at that date, it noted

> a log house in which was a bakery kept by an old woman. Black Rachel had a millinery shop with a small house and a large lot with an abundance of fruit . . . . Then came a bakery and cake store kept by "Granny Ralston," with whom the boys were all as

> intimate as their pennies permitted. . . . [Mr. Mandale] died and his wife and daughter became milliners. . . .[24]

Given the constraints imposed by available sources, it is possible to draw some conclusions about the occupations of women who were heads of households in Wheeling and Morgantown. First, I have excluded all servants living in other people's homes as they were, ipso facto, not the head of the household where they lived. For the purposes of this paper, I have excluded washerwomen and laundresses; while one can safely assume that they were present in every census and city directory, they are not being considered here because they were at the bottom of the occupational ladder, doing back-breaking work that people hired done as soon as they could; in Wheeling, African-Americans and Irish were disproportionately represented in these occupations. I have also tried to compare the occupations held by the heads of households to the broader picture of all working women identified in the directories.

It should not be surprising that, from at least 1800 to 1860, making clothing provided women with large numbers of jobs requiring varying levels of skill. Ava Baron and Susan Klepp have noted that very wealthy women had all their clothing custom-made, while middle-class women used first mantua makers and then dressmakers for special occasions like weddings and funerals. "Mantua" refers to the loose gowns that women wore in the colonial period, so, by mid-nineteenth century, the term was no longer in general common use and "dressmaker" became the term of preference. Dressmakers were expected to know the latest fashions and the proper clothing etiquette and often seem to have come from middle or even upper-class families. Tailoresses were the female equivalent of tailors, not necessarily those who made clothes only for women. Milliners provided bonnets and other headgear.

These were a minority of the women involved in the needle trades,

however, for the vast majority were the seamstresses who did plain sewing, generally as piecework for labor contractors or clothing manufacturers; this work included basting, lining, seaming, trimming, making buttonholes, sewing on buttons, and, often, laundering the clothing when finished.[25] Sewing women, according to Baron and Klepp, were "more exploited than any other wage laborers in America."[26] Certainly there was no problem with a supply of workers, for seamstresses, unlike the young single women who formed most of the work force in the nineteenth century, were more likely to be widows, women abandoned by their husbands, or women with disabled husbands. This was a job that could be done at home with a flexible schedule to accommodate child care. They had no capital to invest as would be needed to start a boarding house or shop. And, we cannot forget that sewing was acceptable women's work in the nineteenth century when few other options were available.

The 1840 census for Wheeling identified 63 women, all white, who were also listed in the 1839 directory with an occupation. According to the directory, 78% were widows, but two were listed with the designation of "feminine covert in calibacy" [sic]. While this term remains elusive, it probably means married women who were living apart from their husbands for some reason. As might be expected, 46% were mantua makers, milliners, seamstresses, and tailoresses. The remaining women had occupations that would also be closely related to the domestic skills all women were supposed to know, and hence acceptable under the prevailing guidelines for women's sphere of interests.[27]

Food-related occupations were always prominent among nineteenth-century Wheeling women. These women ran boarding houses, Beymer had her inn, and Annette McGeary, although not listed in the directory, headed a household of

84, including herself, consisting of 80 whites and 4 slaves. The 1840 group also included bakers, fruit and confectionery shop owners, grocers, a fruiter, and a market woman. Sarah Ray's grocery and provisions store was located next to her house, according to the directory, but there is no information about the location of the others' businesses. Jane Martin and her enterprising daughter combined dealing in fruits and confectionary with being corset manufacturers. One woman ran a variety store, one was a shoe binder, and one a school mistress. Only one had a factory job, and she worked in a paper mill. Women who were not listed as heads of households included two widows who manufactured saddle pads and were cloth stitchers, 3 school mistresses, and 6 tutoresses.

Ten years later, Wheeling's immigrant population was beginning to be evident in the census, but in the interests of time, that will not be a major factor of analysis here. Using the 1851 city directory as a reference, opportunities for women had not changed much. Joanna Adrian was still a mantua maker. The 11 seamstresses and 12 possible boarding house keepers were the only large concentrations of women workers. Chairmaker Mariah (Maria) Cunningham, nurse Levina (Lavinia) Morgan, and a handful of confectioners, grocers, and tutoresses, plus a spinner and a carpet weaver, complete the range of options in the census.[28]

Just before the Civil War, it is easier to learn more about Wheeling women.[29] In that year, there were 131 women who could be identified as heads of households with an occupation, more than double the number in 1840. The slightly larger number of free white and free African-American women than men in the city at the time might account for the larger number of women heads of households who were working. Dressmakers showed up in the census and 1859 directory for the first time. Joanna Adrian, however, was still working away

as a mantua maker and had accumulated $3,000 worth of real estate, tripling her holdings from a decade earlier. The milliners and tailoresses were joined, this time, by an embroiderer and two weavers.

In addition, Wheeling women were more widely distributed in occupations related to providing food and drink. In addition to the usual boarding house keepers, confectioners, and grocers, Julia Garforth was in the business of bottling ales, while Susan Snyder manufactured mineral water, and 61-year-old Mary L. Cating ran a saloon.

Group living for women must also be considered. This census marks the first identifiable convent, the Sisters of Charity, a community of 5 Sisters, 16 other young women aged 17 and under, and 1 male servant. Wheeling's large Irish and German populations made it a city with a significant Roman Catholic population. There were also 5 households headed by female teachers and Mary McCan's household of 5 courtesans and 3 young girls aged 1, 3, and 9. The widow Elizabeth Carr, also a courtesan, lived alone. A wet nurse and gardiner [sic], furniture maker Mariah (Maria) Cunningham, and woolen mill proprietor Elizabeth Bradley, a widow, completed the listings for the census households.

The 1859 city directory added spinsters (those who spun for a living); straw & fancy milliners; owners of a cake and candy store, candy store, confectioneries, and an oyster saloon; the proprietress of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad House; the owners of a bonnet store, children's furnishing store, and millinery shops; teachers; the postmistress of Martinsville, the principal of the Wheeling Female Seminary, and the Mother Superior of the Sisters of Visitation.

The 1860 census, coming a year after the publication of the first city directory to include Morgantown, provides the first opportunity to examine

women's work in that city. We find that Mary Beals was a seamstress, Sally Tucker a tailoress, and Rebecca Snider the owner of a beer and cake shop. The 1859 directory added a dressmaker, milliner, 4 seamstresses, and a spinster to the total. Mrs. Elizabeth I. Moore was the principal of the Woodburn Female Seminary, but she seems to have been the only woman teacher there. Teaching in Morgantown was apparently not open to women, as it was in Wheeling.

The 1864 Wheeling city directory gives an opportunity to examine whether employment opportunities for women in general expanded during the Civil War.[30] Barbara Wertheimer has noted that war-time inflation forced more unmarried girls and young women into the job market. "They headed first for those trades considered most proper" but also became clerks as manufacturers and newspapers urged stores to hire more women, freeing the men to move west and create a market for more goods. Wherever women moved into the job force, however, wages fell.[31] In that year, there were 3 times as many milliners as there had been in 1859 (19 versus 6) and 6 times as many seamstresses (29 versus 5). Where there had been 1 tailoress listed in 1859, there were 40 in 1864. Nine vest-makers were a new addition to the sewing trades. The term "vest" at that time probably referred to a knitted or woven undergarment worn next to the skin. The number of confectioners rose to 7, 3 of the 4 cooks and both the pastry cooks worked at Wheeling hotels, Mrs. Catherine Snider ran the Virginia House hotel, and 6 women ran saloons. Wheeling was the center of government for the Restored Government of Virginia and later the capital for West Virginia during the war, so the city would have been full of temporary visitors needing food and drink in addition to the soldiers passing through on the B&O.

The range of opportunities for women increased, also. Mrs. Therese

Auber moved into the boots & shoes business, while Hannah Cartwright sold "guns, pistols, etc." In addition to 3 nurses and a woman working in the paper mill, there were 2 women employed as passenger car cleaners for the B&O, 2 photograph printers, a physician, 4 women who ran select schools, and 28 teachers, at least 10 of whom were in the city's public schools. While directories are unfortunately not consistent with listings from year to year, these increases seem too great over a short period of time to be accidental.

The fact that the war may have provided short-term opportunities seems emphasized by the fact that the 1867-68 and 1868-69 directories show a more "normal" pattern.[32] There were no more mantua makers, but there were 8 dressmakers, including Mrs. Kyle & Mrs. Watkins, who had a business listed under their combined names; Mrs. Watkins lived over the shop. While the sewing machine was leading to major changes in the needle trades from its introduction in the mid-1850s on, the 1870 census for West Virginia included no sewing machine operators and no sewing machine factory operatives. Everything was apparently still being done by hand.

Businesses generally appeared to be more structured after the war, so that these directories list Mrs. A. Graham's Steam Dye House, Mrs. C. Zimmer's Steam Bread, Cake and Cracker Bakery, the Beck & Reymann Brewery and Malt House (with Mrs. Elizabeth Beck as a partner), the Dunlevy & Co. saw mill, boat builders, and lumber dealers (with Mrs. Elizabeth Dunlevy as a partner), and Mrs. Bradley's Woolen Mills. Perhaps some of these women lost their husbands during the war, leaving them in charge of the business. As hotels gained importance over boarding houses, 9 women worked as waiters at the Grant House hotel. For the first time, the directory included women as clerks and showed 5 women working at Central Glass Works or the Ohio Valley Glass Company. This is

the first indication, other than the paper mill worker, that Wheeling women had anything to do with the traditional smokestack industries in the town. A.M. Wilson was the manageress of the Pacific and Atlantic Telegraph Co., another apparent first, one woman was an agent for a bedstead manufacturer, and Maria Cunningham was still in the cabinet business. Of the 24 teachers, only 5 were identified as being in the public schools, so one wonders if the men came back and took over those jobs after the war.

The Morgantown city directory for 1868 listed only 4 working women: dressmaker Lucinda Evans, mantua maker Sarah Dorsey, seamstress Carrie Stewart, all single, and boarding house keeper Mrs. E.A. Dorsey, a widow. The 1870 census identified Prissie Clark, an African-American, and Elizabeth Moore as the only two women doing anything other than keeping house, but at least a few women in that census seem to have had college students from the fledgling West Virginia University boarding in their homes because the university provided minimal housing for its students.[33]

Skipping ahead to 1880, we find in Wheeling the usual complement of dressmakers, milliners, seamstresses, and tailoresses. French titles must have been in fashion at the time because the census lists Madame Amanda J. Lagarde, a 44-year-old widow born, actually, in West Virginia, as the owner of a real hair & fancy goods store that also did stamping and dying. The city directory for that year identified Madame L.M. Atkinson, who billed herself as a French modiste, or one who made and sold fashionable dresses and hats for women.[34]

Women still ran boarding houses, confectioneries, and groceries. Ruth Schwartz Cowan has remarked on the development of boarding houses in the decades between 1870 and 1920 when "growing numbers of middle- and upper-class families either did not wish, or simply could not afford, to undertake the

expense of running an independent household."[35] While Wheeling women had clearly been running boarding houses for many years, the fact that there were 20 women so identified in 1880 may be a reflection of the national trend Cowan has noticed. While little has been said about ethnicity here, it is interesting to note that, in 1880, baker Caroline Zimmer, the 2 candy store owners, and 4 of the 5 confectionary owners were German. The 3 confectioners shown in the city directory lived and worked at the same address. The 8 grocers, the 70-year-old herb seller, and the divorced saloon keeper complete the roster of women in food-related businesses.

Miscellaneous occupations for heads of households included the matron of the children's home, a nurse, a paper hanger, and a spiritualist. Druggist Harriet Brentlinger, cigar manufacturer Henrietta Reyman, and Mrs. S.E. Boyd, who ran an agricultural implements and seed business, may have inherited their businesses from their husbands.

The final group of women to be considered from the 1880 census are those who lived in some type of group housing. Julia Quill was the Mother Superior for a Community of Sisters that included a total of 45 women and 1 1-year-old boy. The women included 2 servants, 1 woman at school, and 42 teachers. Mary Woods, a 21-year-old single woman, listed her occupation as prostitute; she headed a household that included 4 other women between the ages of 20 and 24 who also were identified as prostitutes and 1 mulatto woman whose occupation was given as "domestic." Finally, 32-year-old Melissa Robinson, a widow, was listed as a bagnio-keeper. The Oxford English Dictionary gives several meanings for bagnio, but the one most current to 1880 was brothel or house of prostitution. If that was the case, instead of the earlier meaning of penal establishment, why were the 2 19-year-old women listed as boarders there

with an occupation of "inmate"? The fourth resident was Robinson's 10-year-old son.

The 1880 census for Morgantown presents final interesting challenges.[36] The 48 women listed as heads of households included 33 who kept house. The easy occupations to explain are the dressmakers, the cook (an African-American), and teacher Elizabeth Moore, who was then head of her own Morgantown Female Seminary. The remaining group of 10 women, including 6 whites, 3 African-Americans, and 1 mulatto, ranged in age from 25 to 56. They were listed as laborers in the census. This term is used to refer to unskilled workers, but Morgantown was not then a town that provided many opportunities for anyone, male or female, to do unskilled work. Clearly, more work needs to be done to see if this was a catch-all category of some type.

What conclusions can be drawn from this work to date? Women such as these are anonymous to most researchers. It is difficult to track them in the census and city directories. They moved in and out of town and changed their names when they married. The vast majority followed occupations that capitalized on women's traditional domestic and nurturing (i.e., teaching) skills. Even when they moved into retail shops, they usually did so in areas related to cooking and sewing, i.e. groceries and millinery shops. However, these types of shops were not owned exclusively by women. Some inherited their husbands' businesses. Those without the skill or funds to work in a factory or open a shop were relegated, one might even say condemned, to low paying jobs as seamstresses and washerwomen. Or, if they wanted more money, they became prostitutes. In general, though, they worked in a pre-industrial economy, even when they lived in the midst of a city as heavily industrialized as Wheeling.

NOTES

1. Research for this paper was funded, in part, by a fellowship from the Humanities Foundation of West Virginia, a state program of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

2. Studies such as Faye Dudden's Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth-Century America and David Katzman's Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrial America discuss one popular option, and the 1880 Wheeling city directory, in particular, included many women working as servants. Alice Kessler-Harris's Out to Work and Women Have Always Worked document the general patters of nineteenth-century women's employment but pay special attention to women in labor unions and factories. Neither servants or factory workers, however, are the focus here.

3. A cursory examination of city directories from 1839 to 1889 identifies 24 breweries, 24 glass manufacturers, 84 businesses related to the production of metal goods, 16 companies specializing in steam engines, and 12 related to the textile industry. This information was compiled as an appendix for the industrial archeology guide to Wheeling entitled Wheeling Port of Entry, ed. by Elizabeth Nolin for the 1988 Society for Industrial Archeology conference in Wheeling. The directory information is an appendix on pp. 48-57.

4. The exact figures for 1860 were 97.81% native born for West Virginia, 75.3% for Ohio County (5,511 of 22,322), and 86.85% for the United States as a whole (Joseph D.G. Kennedy, Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census, Under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior [Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864], pp. xxxi, 521.

5. Kennedy, Population of the United States in 1850, p. 521.

6. The 1853-4 population estimate is from J.D.B. DeBow, Statistical View of the United States . . . . Being a Compendium of the Seventh Census . . . . (Washington, D.C.: A.O.P Nicholson, Public Printer, 1854), p. 370. The 1868 figure is from George H. Thurston, comp. and pub., Directory of the Monongahela and Youghiogheny Valleys, Containing Brief Historical Sketches of the Various Towns Located on Them; with a Statistical Exhibit of the Collieries upon the Two Rivers (Pittsburgh: A.A. Anderson & Sons, 1868), p. 19.

7. Thurston, Directory of the Monongahela and Youghiogheny Valleys, p. 20.

8. DeBow, Statistical View of the United States, p. iv.

9. These were mining, agriculture, commerce, manufactures and trades, navigation of the ocean, navigation of the canals, lakes, and rivers, and learned professions and engineers.

10. This information was derived from listings in the United States, Bureau of the Census, Census for Ohio County, 1840.

11. The city directory information is from J.B. Bowen, The Wheeling Directory and Advertiser (Wheeling: John M. M'Creary, Printer, 1839).

12. DeBow, The Seventh Census of the United States, p. 4.

13. Oliver I. Taylor, Directory of the City of Wheeling & Ohio County, Comprising the Names, Occupations and Residences of the Inhabitants . . . . . (Wheeling: Office of the Daily Gazette, 1851).

14. DeBow, The Seventh Census of the United States, p. iv.

15. Francis A. Walker, Ninth Census --Volume I. The Statistics of the Population of the United States . . . Compiled from the Original Returns of the Ninth Census, (June 1, 1870,) under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), p. 659.

16. Boston was ranked 4th in size and had 427 women in manufacturing jobs; Cincinnati was 7th with 707 women, St. Louis 8th with 178 women, Chicago 9th with 346 women, Albany 13th with 348 women, Washington, D.C. 14th with 38 women, Detroit 19th with 76 women, and Milwaukee 20th with 278 women. Richmond was 25th in size with 158 women in manufacturing jobs, while Norfolk was 63rd in size with 39 women, and Alexandria was 81st with 148 women (1860 compendium, pp. xviii-xix).

17. There were also 15 women and 26 men working in 2 paper printing establishments, 4 women and 24 men working in 2 paper wrapping establishments, one woman and 6 men working in 1 printing establishment, and 9 women and 13 men working in 1 woolen goods establishment (Data is from 1860 manufactures compendium, p. 625.). The business directory section of the city directory for 1859-60 identifies the only cotton manufacturer as Robert Patterson's Wheeling Cotton Mills. The directory cites 1 paper dealer, 4 paper mills, and 4 paper manufacturers, with nothing listed under printing, so it is unclear why there is so much discrepancy between the census listings and directory listings. The woolen manufacturer in the census is likely the only one in the directory, Elizabeth Bradley's Woolen Mills. For further information about Wheeling businesses in 1859-60, see George H. Thurston, comp., Directory of the City of Wheeling and Vicinity; Embracing the Adjoining Towns of Benwood, Lagrange, Bellaire, Kirkwood, Bridgeport, Martinsville and Fulton, For 1859-60 (Wheeling: Daily Intelligencer Office, 1859).

18. Manufactures of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1865), p. 622.

19. Francis A. Walker, comp., A Compendium of the Ninth Census (June 1, 1870) (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), pp. 597, 603, 606-607. Walker's exact figures, on p. 597, were 28,288,945 above the age of 10 and 12,505,923 in the Table of Occupations.

20. Walker, Compendium of the Ninth Census, pp. 600-601. Subtracting the females who were attending school and those who were paupers, vagrants, and criminals left him with a figure of exactly 1,594,783 women between the ages of

16 and 59 appearing in the Table of Occupations, leaving him 8,150,000 to be accounted for between the ages of 16 and 59. Using his ratios described below, he found almost an additional 1 million for ages 60 and above. He found "a curious, though probably not significant, rate of progression" between the ratios of working men and women. "In the first period [ages 10-15], the females pursuing gainful occupations are to the males as one to three; in the second period [16-59] as one to six; in the third period [60 and above] as one to twelve" (p. 599). There were 7,579,863 households in the census. "This number must be reduced, however, to the extent to which females, the heads of families, and doing all the housekeeping that is done for their families, are also returned as of specific occupations.

"No one familiar with factory-towns will doubt that this reduction should be considerable; yet we shall probably reach the truth of the case substantially if we cut down the number to be accounted for as 'keeping house' to 7,400,000" (pp. 600-601). In a note on page 601, he gives a total of 1,645,188 women in the Table of Occupations: 323,791 women in agriculture, 17,582 in trade and transportation, 328,791 in manufacturing and mining, and 975,529 in personal and professional services.

21. Walker, A Compendium of the Ninth Census, p. 601. The exact figure he used was 179,363.

22. Walker, A Compendium of the Ninth Census, p. 602. The remaining c. 150,000 were women whom he felt were part of the work force but were not reflected in the Table of Occupations.

23. The precise figures were 6,357 domestic servants; 457 tailoresses and seamstresses; 343 teachers of unspecified subjects and 12 of painting, dancing, and music; 225 laundresses; 228 milliners, dress and mantua makers; and 235 engaged in agriculture-related occupations, for a total of 96% (Walker, Ninth Census -- Volume I. The Statistics of the Population of the United States, pp. 687-695).

24. J.H. Newton, G.G. Nichols, and A.G. Sprankle, History of the Pan-Handle: Being Historical Collections of the Counties of Ohio, Brooke, Marshall and Hancock, West Virginia (Wheeling: J.A. Caldwell, 1879), pp. 183-184, 187.

25. Ava Baron and Susan E. Klepp, "'If I Didn't Have My Sewing Machine. . .': Women and Sewing Machine Technology," in Joan M. Jensen and Sue Davidson, eds., A Needle, A Bobbin, A Strike: Women Needleworkers in America (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), pp. 21-22.

26. Baron and Klepp, "'If I Didn't Have My Sewing Machine . . .'," p. 23.

27. One of the best discussions of women's separate spheres is Barbara Welter's "The Cult of True Womanhood," in Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), pp. 21-41.

28. This information was compiled from United States, Bureau of the Census, Census for Ohio County, 1850; and Oliver I. Taylor, Directory of the City of Wheeling & Ohio County.

29. Information on this group of women comes from the United States, Bureau of the Census, Census for Ohio County, 1860; and Thurston, Directory of the City of Wheeling and Vicinity (1859).

30. Williams & Co., Williams' Wheeling Directory, City Guide and Business Mirror, For 1864: To Which is Appended a United States Post Office Directory. 2nd issue (Wheeling: Williams & Co., 1864).

31. Barbara Mayer Wertheimer, We Were There: The Story of Working Women in America (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), p. 156.

32. J.C. Orr & Co., Williams' Wheeling Directory for 1867-'68. 3rd issue (Wheeling: J.C. Orr & Co., 1867).

33. Thurston, Directory of the Monongahela and Youghiogheny Valleys; and United States, Bureau of the Census, Census for Monongalia County, 1880.

34. Information for the 1880 contingent of women is compiled from the United States, Bureau of the Census, Census for Ohio County, 1880; and W.L. Callin's Wheeling City Directory for 1880-81 (Wheeling: Lewis Baker & Co., 1880).

35. Ruth Schwartz Cowan, More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave (New York: Basic Books, 1983), p. 108.

36. This information is drawn from United States, Bureau of the Census, Census for Monongalia County, 1880.